

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method to provide short messaging service (SMS) messages to a receiving party associated with a plurality of devices, the method comprising:
 - receiving and storing, at a server device and from the receiving party, information identifying a preferred device, of the plurality of devices, and characteristics of the preferred device;
 - receiving, at the ~~the~~ [[a]] server device, a SMS message addressed to a first device of the plurality of devices;
 - identifying, by the server device, a second device of the plurality of devices as ~~the~~ [[a]] the preferred device, instead of the first device, to receive the SMS message based on the information stored by the receiving party at the server device, where the second device is identified without sending the SMS message to the first device;
 - formatting, by the server device, the SMS message according to the characteristics of the preferred device, where formatting the SMS message includes determining, based on the characteristics, whether the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as a textual message or an audio message; and
 - sending, by the server device, the formatted message to the preferred device, where sending the formatted message includes sending the formatted message via a pathway that

does not include the first device, where sending the formatted message includes sending, when the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as the audio message, the formatted message as a voice message that the receiving party can access via the preferred device, and where sending the formatted message includes sending, when the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as the textual message, the formatted message as a SMS, e-mail, or instant) message.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, where:
the preferred device comprises an SMS-compatible device,
formatting the SMS message includes formatting the message in an SMS format,
and
sending the formatted message comprises sending the formatted message to the
SMS-capable device.
3. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, where sending the formatted
message comprises sending the formatted message to an e-mail address that the receiving party
can access via the preferred device.
4. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, where sending the formatted
message comprises sending the formatted message to an instant messenger client that the
receiving party can run on the preferred device.

5. (canceled)

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, where sending the formatted message comprises sending the formatted message to digital companion client software that the receiving party can run on the preferred device.

7. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, where sending the formatted message comprises:

determining when the preferred device is available to receive the formatted message,

storing the formatted message in a database when the preferred device is not available to receive the formatted message, and

recovering the stored formatted message when the preferred device is available to receive the formatted message.

8. (canceled)

9. (currently amended) An apparatus to provide short message service (SMS) messages to a user associated with a plurality of devices, the apparatus comprising:

a database to store information identifying each device of the plurality of devices,
~~and identifying~~ a first device₁ of the plurality of devices₁ as a preferred device, and characteristics of the preferred device;

a gateway server to receive a SMS message identifying a second device of the plurality of devices; and

a SMS server to:

implement a server function to identify the preferred device instead of the second device for receiving the SMS message in response to receiving the SMS message, the preferred device being different than the second device, where the server ~~functions~~ function identifies the preferred device without sending the SMS message to the second device;

format the SMS message in accordance with the characteristics of the preferred device, where when formatting the SMS message, the SMS server is further to determine, based on the characteristics, whether the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as a textual message or an audio message, and

send the message to the preferred device, where the SMS server, when sending the formatted message, is further to determine a pathway to the preferred device that does not include the second device, where, when sending the formatted message, the SMS server is further to:

send, when the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as the audio message, the formatted message as a voice message, and

send, when the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as the textual message, the formatted message as a SMS, e-mail, or instant message.

10. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, where the SMS server is further to store messages to a database when the preferred device is not available to receive messages.

11. (canceled)

12. (currently amended) An apparatus to provide short message service (SMS) messages to a user associated with a plurality of devices, the apparatus comprising:

means for storing information identifying a preferred device, of the plurality of devices, and a specification of ~~[[a]]~~ the preferred device;

means for receiving a SMS message identifying one device of the plurality of devices;

means for selecting the preferred device, instead of the identified one device, for receiving the SMS message in response to receiving the SMS message, the preferred device being different than the identified one device, where the preferred device is identified without sending the SMS message to the identified ~~identified~~ one device; and

means for sending the SMS message to the preferred device, the means for sending the SMS message comprising means for formatting, based on the specification of the preferred device, the SMS message in accordance with characteristics of the preferred device before sending the SMS message to the preferred device, where the means for sending the SMS message employs a pathway to the preferred device that does not include the identified one device, where means for formatting the SMS message include:

means for determining, based on the characteristics, whether the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as a textual message or an audio message,

means for sending, when the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as the audio message, the formatted message as a voice message, and

send for sending, when the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as the textual message, the formatted message as a SMS, e-mail, or instant message.

13. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 12, where the means for sending the SMS message comprises means for storing messages to a database when the preferred device is not available to receive messages.

14-15. (canceled)

16. (currently amended) A method, performed by a network routing device, the method comprising:

receiving a short message service (SMS) message including information identifying a first destination device;

identifying a second destination device instead of the first destination device for receiving the SMS message in response to receiving the SMS message, the second destination device being different than the first destination device, where the second destination device is identified without sending the SMS message to the first destination device;

formatting the SMS message based on stored characteristics associated with the second destination device, where formatting the SMS message includes determining, based on the characteristics, whether the second destination device is to receive the SMS message as a textual message or an audio message; and

sending, via a pathway that does not include the first destination device, the formatted SMS message to the second destination device, where sending the formatted message includes:

sending, when the second destination device is to receive the SMS message as the audio message, the formatted message as a voice message, and

sending, when the preferred device is to receive the SMS message as the textual message, the formatted message as a SMS, e-mail, or instant message.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 16 where the first destination device and the second destination device are associated with a receiving party, and

where the identifying includes:

identifying the second destination device based on a profile associated with receiving party.